

Gender violence and responsible use of social networks



web <http://www.comune.modena.it/progetto-login/>



Log In (Laboratories On Gender violence In New media)

Project coordinator:

City of Modena: www.comune.modena.it

Project Partners:

- > Centro documentazione donna: www.cddonna.it
- > The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies:
www.medinstgenderstudies.org
- > Women's Issues Information Centre: www.lygus.lt/mic
- > Asociatia pentru Libertate si Egalitate and gendewr equality issues: www.aleg-romania.eu

> Gender violence and responsible use of social networks

This guide is intended for adults (parents and teachers) and provides guidelines about how to talk with young people about delicate issues such as gender violence, as well as considerations relating to the responsible use of new media.

> The “log in” project General objectives

The general objective of the project is to prevent and combat gender violence by promoting, among teenagers, responsible use of Social Networks and New Media. Universally accepted data regarding gender violence are not available, however it is estimated that in Europe 20% to 25% of women have experienced violence at least once in the course of their lives. For several years it has been accepted that it is essential to promote constructive dialogue between the sexes and eliminate gender stereotypes if the phenomenon of gender violence is to be effectively prevented.

To do so, it is important to start with young people, since it is between the ages of 14 and 18 that they have their first relationships, and stereotypes and prejudices take root in their behaviour and attitudes. The “Log In” project aims not only to combat the role

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played by social networks and new media in promoting negative stereotypes and new forms of gender violence, but also and above all to exploit the opportunity of enabling young people to form relationships and interactions based on dialogue and mutual respect.

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> Gender violence some definitions

The “Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence” (Istanbul, 11 May 2011) defines:

- **“violence against women”** as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women, including all acts of gender-based violence which cause physical, sexual, psychological and economic damage and suffering, including threats of such violence, coercion and arbitrary privation of liberty, in public and private life;
- **“domestic violence”** as all acts of violence which occur in the family or family nucleus between spouses, ex-spouses or partners, regardless of whether the author of the violence shares or has previously shared residence with the victim;
- **“gender”** as the set of roles, behaviours, activities and attributes - socially constructed - which a given society considers to be appropriate for men and women;
- **“gender based violence against women”** as any violence directed against a woman as such, or which afflicts women to a disproportionate degree.

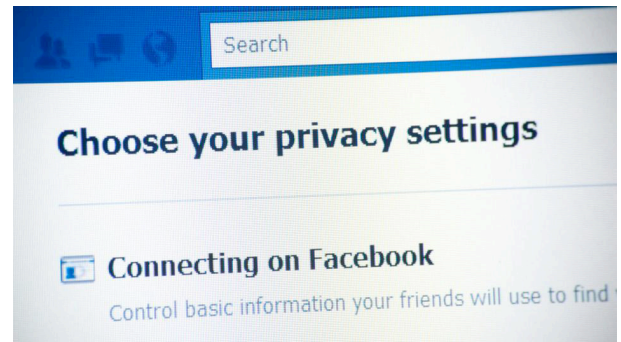
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> On-line privacy Warnings for internet users

A declaration (or explanatory page) has been set up by the service provider - often a simple extract of the terms of use of the site - containing information about how personal information entered by the user on the social networking site will be used, by whom, and what options the user has to oppose such treatment. For further information one may refer to the following website: www.garanteprivacy.it. (each enter his own!)

- When you enter your personal information into a social networking site you lose your control over it. The information may be registered by all contacts and members of groups to which you belong; they may be processed and distributed even years later.
- If you decide to quit a social networking site you are only permitted to disable your profile, not delete it. The information and material you have put on-line may nonetheless be kept on the service provider's servers (computer archives).
- You are the best defender of your own privacy. Think carefully before entering any information on-line which you do not wish to be passed on or which may be used against you. It is therefore important to set up your profile in such a way as to prevent or limit the passing on of your personal information, and it is better not to enter sensitive information such as your address or telephone numbers.

- When you put the pictures of your friends or family members on-line, and when you tag such picture (by entering their names into the photos), ask yourself whether you are violating their privacy in doing so. If in doubt, ask for their permission.
- Beware of false profiles. All that is needed is the name, picture and some information about the life of a person to take over their on-line identity.



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> Social Networks

Social Networks (FaceBook, MySpace, Twitter, LiveJournal, Badoo) are virtual spaces in which people can meet and share photographs, films, their thoughts, the addresses of friends and many other things on-line. They are sharing tools, amazing forms of communication. They build up a “**virtual social network**” which creates new and different relationships, even though they involve risks for the personal sphere of the persons in question.

When you join a social network you must create a personal profile which includes information about yourself, as well as information about your hobbies, personal interests and friendships. In order to bring your social network to life, you can invite your friends to join in, look for people with shared interests on-line and share any kind of information with them. This creates a thematic “community” which brings people together on the basis of their interests, shared characteristics and experiences.

> Facebook

This is by far the most popular social network in the world and the most familiar to and widely used by young people.



> What can you do on facebook? An internet glossary

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- **PROFILE/ACCOUNT** • The set of personal data and content uploaded onto the social network. This may be no more than the username used to identify a user for access to an on-line service. Only persons on the same network or confirmed “friends” may view personal profile information.

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- **ALIAS/FAKE** • To take on a false identity. A user may choose a fantasy name or pseudonym or steal the data of real person. At times the word fake is used to indicate a false item of information or news.

- **TO LOG-IN/AUTHENTICATE ONESELF,** • to access a site or on-line service with a username and password.

- **CHAT** • an instant text messaging service. On-line chats may be restricted to two people or include a larger group of users.

- **TO UPLOAD** • content and documents of any kind (audio, video, text, image) on-line.

- **TO SHARE**, • allow other users (whether friends or not) to access material either directly on the user's computer or which has been uploaded on-line.

- **NICKNAME** • A pseudonym.

- **TO POST**, • to publish a message ("post") - not necessarily limited to text - on a forum or board.

- **TO DOWNLOAD**, • to save on-line documents to one's computer or external memory device (such as a USB key).

- **TO TAG**, • to assign a virtual label ("tag") to a file or part of a file (text, audio, video, image). On social networks, one more often says "you've been tagged" when someone has linked your name to a face in an on-line photo. As a consequence, if someone does a search for your name, the search results will include the photo in question.

- **TO PLAY** • one of the vast number of interactive on-line games.

- **CYBERBULLYING**, • on-line bullying; often done by uploading offensive videos or photos, or by violating the digital identity of a person on a social network site. This is an increasingly common event among young people.

- **CYBERSTALKING**, • molesting another person on-line using websites, email, GPS, intrusive software, or any other electronic tools.

> Social networks: be aware of their collateral effects

The growth of social networks has inevitably led to changes in how people interact socially, and these are both positive and negative. They are tool which give the impression of a personal space or small community, whereas in reality affective relationships are intimate and personal. The risks are largely connected to the overlap between one's private life and the revelation and passing on of strictly personal information.

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Social networks > PROS Social networks > CONS

- They are cheap, convenient and always available;
- Communications take place in real time;
- They have a global reach;
- They promote interpersonal relationships.
- They create dependency and loss of contact with the real world;
- It is easy to create a false identity;
- There is a loss of privacy;
- The fact of being on-line anonymously favours transgressive and violent behaviour.

> How should we talk with our kids?

Parents and teachers are responsible for establishing an environment which is favourable to dialogue and constructive discussion. Some methodological suggestions:

Set up a climate which is empathic, non-judgemental to facilitate communication. Do not criticise them because they have doubts - however banal or mistaken they may seem to you - but allow them to speak freely. Always ask for their opinion about things, and listen to their answers.

Look for opportunities for dialogue always listen to your kids, and pay attention to them without allowing other things to distract you or interrupt them. Talk honestly to your kids about whatever they want to discuss, without setting up taboos or prohibitions.

Take interest in what interests them, talk with them about what they do on-line, who their friends are, and warn them not to accept friendships with people who are unknown to them.

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> Some suggestions What should we talk with our kids about?

Boys and girls are not born knowing what codes of conduct are right or wrong for their whole lives. Just as, when they are children, we teach them how to cross the road or pay attention to obvious hazards, we must also, when they are teenagers, teach them how to behave in affective relations and friendships; educate them about the quality of interpersonal relationships and the need to respect others; prepare them to recognise small signals which conceal bigger problems (such as being too jealous or possessive, checking out another person's cellphone, etc.).

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What is a healthy relationship between the sexes? What is an unhealthy relationship between the sexes?

A healthy relationship is one in which two people share power and take decisions together. A healthy relationship is built on trust, good communications, agreement and mutual respect.

An unhealthy relationship is characterised by inequality between the partners, in which one exercises power over the other. Such relationships are characterised by threats, coercion, and physical and psychological abuse.

> The definitions of gender and sex

Gender

The term "gender" refers to the roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women by society. Boys and girls are not born knowing how they should look, dress, speak, behave or think. Their socialisation is influenced by their families, colleagues, community, institutions and the media. Gender roles are cultural artefacts, not natural phenomena, and can and do change with time.

Sex

The term "sex" refers to the biological characteristics with which men and women are born. These are universal characteristics, usually permanent: for instance, men cannot breastfeed, women menstruate, etc.

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> What is a matter of gender or sex?

- Women can give birth, men cannot
 gender sex
- Boys are better at maths than girls
 gender sex
- Women can breastfeed babies, men cannot
 gender sex
- Girls are modest, pretty and shy, boys are strong and tough
 gender sex
- Girls need a good husband, boys need a good job
 gender sex
- Girls can get pregnant, men cannot
 gender sex

> Gender stereotypes

Stereotypes are a set of characteristics associated with a category or group of people on the basis of limited or inadequate knowledge. Gender stereotypes, whether about men or women, may be both negative and positive. Most frequently, it is the male that imposes itself on the female. The positive characteristics of men take priority over those of women, to whom negative characteristics are generally assigned in comparison with the other sex.

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For instance, a man who speaks a lot may be called loquacious or a good talker; a woman who speaks a lot is called a chatterbox or a gossip.

A girl who frequently changes boyfriend is considered easy, a guy who has many flirts is considered a real macho.

> Gender stereotypes in relation to violence

What do you know about gender violence? Distinguish between myths (commonplaces) and facts (the truth).

Myths

- > The victims of violence are generally weak people.
- > Violent people are people who cannot control their anger. Violence is a momentary loss of control.
- > Persons who fail to report violence of which they are the victims secretly want the violence to continue.
- > Mocking someone on Face Book is not as bad as doing so in person.
- > The seriousness of sexual harassment is exaggerated. Most so-called harassment is negligible and harmless.
- > Abusing alcohol and drugs leads to violence.
- > Violence in intimate relationships is more common among poor and uneducated people.
- > Girls sometimes suffer sexual violence as a consequence of how they dress and behave.

Facts

- Gossip and putdowns are forms of violence.
- Physical violence is just as serious as psychological violence.
- Jealousy is not an indication that someone loves you.
- Women are more likely to suffer sexual violence from people known to them than from strangers.
- Forcing a girl to have sex, even if the person doing so is her boyfriend, is always a form of abuse.
- Violence in intimate relationships is just as wide spread among adults as it is among young people.
- Rape may occur even in a stable relationship as a couple.

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> How do young people use social networks?

It is important to make boys and girls aware of, attentive to and familiar with the issues of gender violence, the cultural mechanisms which generate and promote violence, and the role played by new technologies and social networks in spreading gender stereotypes, violence in interpersonal relationships, and lack of respect for the rights and dignity of others.

> As parents, have you ever asked your kids...?

Have you ever gone on-line with your kids? Do you know which groups they belong to?

Are they careful about their privacy and that of their friends?

Do the songs and videos you kids listen to and watch incite or condone violence?

What types of message have you encountered on new media which incite discrimination, support stereotyping and promote violence?

Have you ever asked them if they have been subject to cyberbullying or have participated in such activities?

What posters do they have up on their walls? Who are their heroes/heroines?

Do they ask for permission before publishing pictures of other people?

What sorts of messages do they put out on Facebook or other social networks? Are they positive messages, or do they conceal stereotypes and prejudices? Do they blatantly incite to or condone violence?

Do they use Facebook to promote public campaigns and initiatives?

If you want to know more about it....

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

This new landmark treaty of the Council of Europe opens the path for creating a legal framework at pan-European level to protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence. The Convention has been signed in Istanbul on May 11th, 2011.

Up to December 31st, 2013 countries that have ratified the Convention are: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia and Turkey. More information are available on the website <http://www.conventions.coe.int>

In Europe, it is estimated that one-fifth to one-quarter of all women have experienced physical violence at least once during their adult lives, and more than one-tenth have suffered sexual violence. Figures for all forms of GBV, including stalking, are as high as 45%. The majority of such violent acts are carried out by men known to the victim, most often by partners or ex-partners. (COE, 2011).

Gender gap

The Global Gender Gap Report 2013 finds that 86 out of 133 countries improved their global gender gap between 2012 and 2013, with the area of political participation seeing the greatest progress.

- Iceland has the narrowest gender gap in the world, followed by Finland, Norway and Sweden.
 - Data indicates that overall slight gains in gender parity mask the emergence of twin-track paths towards economic equality in many countries and regions.
- <http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap>

Social Network

According to the survey "Social Networking, Age and Privacy" by the London School of Economics, in Europe, 38% of those who are aged between 9 and 12 years old use social networks. One fifth of them declare that they have a profile on Facebook even though the minimum age allowed to register is 13 years. In the group of youths aged between 13 and 16 years, the percentage of use of social networks rises to 77%. Facebook is popular among one third of young social networks' users aged between 13 and 16 years.

Regarding the role of parents, the survey shows that 32% of European parents do not allow their children to use social networks, while 20% of them allow their children to use social networks with their supervision and 48% of them does not give any restriction.



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